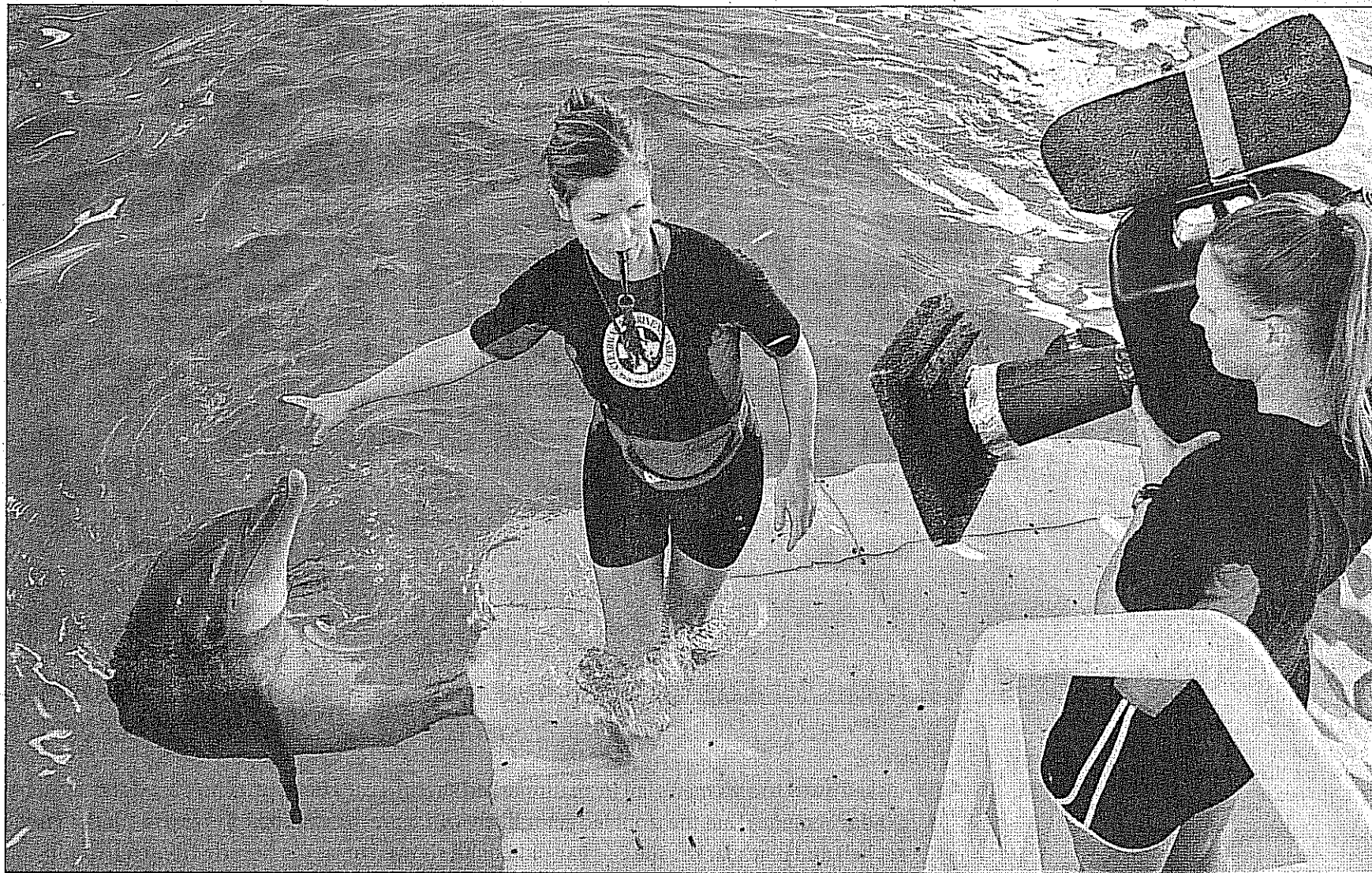


A Dolphin's Tale will put the well-known story of the dolphin with a prosthetic tail on the big screen.



JIM DAMASKE | Times

As trainer Abby Stone works with Winter, volunteer Nicole Antaya holds a fake camera to get the dolphin used to having filmmaking equipment near her.

Winter's going Hollywood

BY STEVE PERSALL
Times Film Critic

The Clearwater Marine Aquarium announced Tuesday that a movie based on its most famous resident will begin filming on Sept. 27 in Pinellas County.

A Dolphin's Tale, based on the heartwarming story of Winter the dolphin, will continue production

through mid December, primarily at the sea life sanctuary. The release date is expected in 2011.

Aquarium chief executive David Yates added that *A Dolphin's Tale* will be filmed in 3D.

A Dolphin's Tale will be produced by Alcon Entertainment and distributed by Warner Bros., which collaborated on the Academy Award-

winning *The Blind Side*. Warner and Alcon also teamed on *The Book of Eli* starring Denzel Washington.

No budget was announced for the production. Alcon publicist Tony Angellotti said from Los Angeles that his clients generally doesn't reveal such numbers.

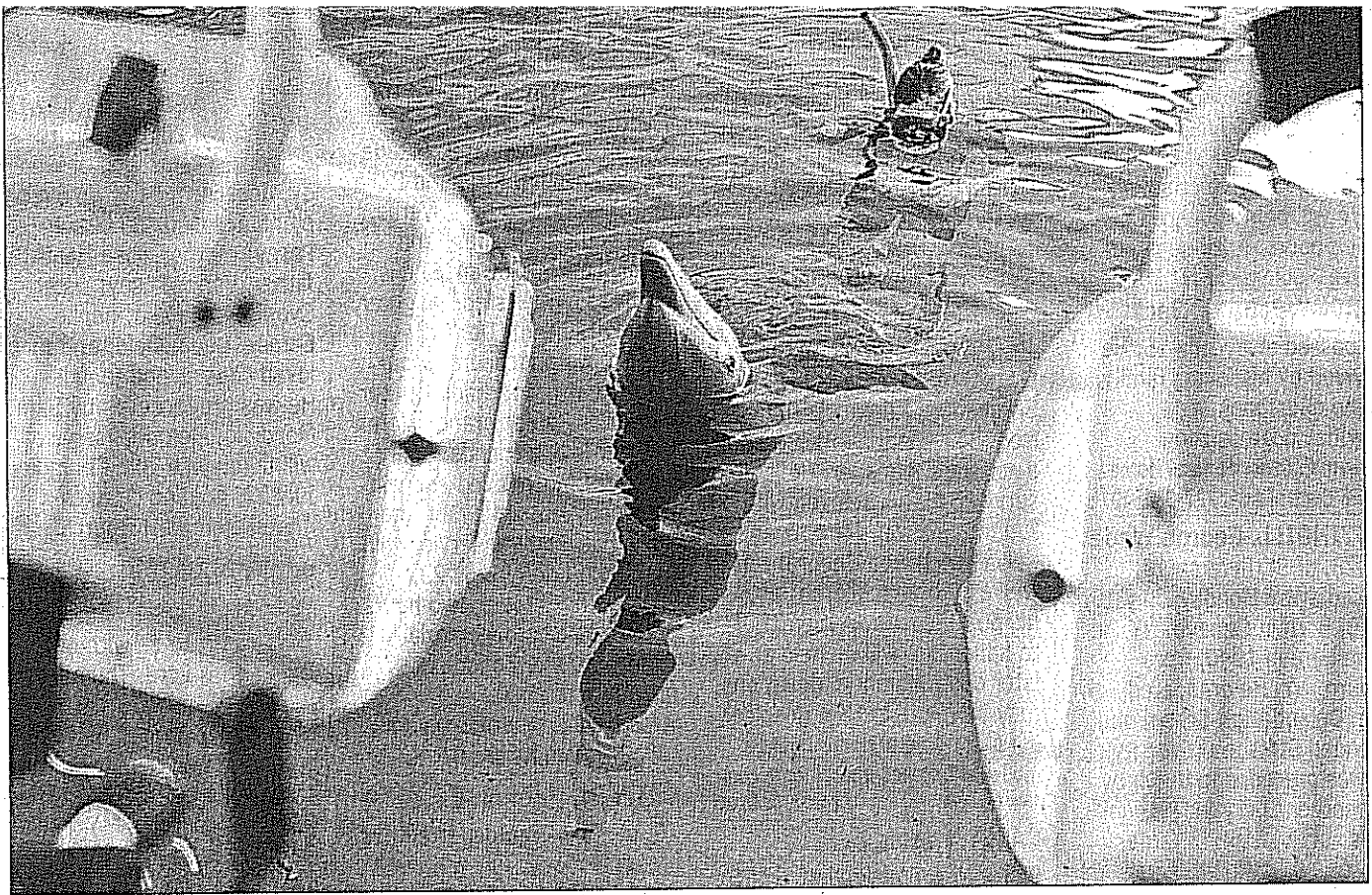
The aquarium has a confidential agreement with Alcon for

compensation in exchange for cooperation. Yates also expects a significant boon to local tourism.

"Financially, we have some compensation," he said. "But the biggest way (that) we and the area benefit is that tourists will come into the area. We expect our attendance (at the aquarium) to double and poten-
» See DOLPHIN, 8B

The tale of a dolphin's tail

Watch video of Winter's rescue and road back to health at video.tampabay.com.



JIM DAMASKE | Times

Spotlights shine on Winter the dolphin to help her get used to the hubbub of filmmaking while Clearwater Marine Aquarium head trainer Abby Stone works to prepare Winter for the start of filming Sept. 27 on *A Dolphin's Tale*, Winter's life story.

» DOLPHIN continued from 1B

Winter goes Hollywood

tially triple in the first year.

"History has shown that films with specific locations have a long-term impact on the economy. ... We expect this to be the largest single tourist promotion in our area's history."

The deal for *A Dolphin's Tale* comes three weeks after the Florida Legislature approved a \$53.5 million tax incentive program to attract productions. That bodes well for Tampa Bay actors and craft workers since only money spent by the production that stays in Florida is eligible for the tax credit, up to \$8 million.

Pinellas County film commissioner Jennifer Parramore said her office's business model estimates that a mid-sized production like *A Dolphin's Tale* can pump up to \$125,000 into the local economy each day of production.

Locations other than the aquarium are being secured. No actors have been cast yet except

Winter — who will play herself — and head trainer Abby Stone, who has a wordless role in order to stay near the dolphin.

Yates spoke to reporters above the ice skating rink at Westfield Countryside Shopping Center, which is circled by a recently installed mural devoted to Winter and the aquarium.

Among the onlookers were *A Dolphin's Tale* consultant and famed underwater filmmaker Ricou Browning, and unit production manager Jim Bigham of Miami, the production's liaison with the Florida film commission.

Winter made international headlines in 2006 when she lost her tail after being tangled in a crab trap off the coast of Cape Canaveral. The Clearwater Marine Aquarium took her in, and scientists later attached a newly devised prosthetic tail. Winter's story has inspired many, including children with

amputated limbs. The technology was adapted to build prosthetic limbs for injured soldiers.

A Dolphin's Tale blends Winter's true saga with a fictional boy named Sawyer who befriends her. Characters loosely based on Yates and Stone are included. Charles Martin Smith wrote the screenplay and is hired to direct.

More casting choices are expected soon. "I expect to see many well-known names in the film," Yates said. "I just can't tell you who they are."

Smith previously directed *Air Bud*, another family-friendly animal story. As an actor, Smith played "Terry the Toad" in 1973's *American Graffiti*, and a member of the Crickets in *The Buddy Holly Story*.

"Winter has been so inspirational to so many people, it's an honor to be able to bring her story to the screen," Smith said in a news release provided by

the aquarium.

Winter's story was previously detailed in the children's book *Winter's Tail: How One Little Dolphin Learned to Swim Again*, and the documentary short, *Winter: The Dolphin that Could*.

At the end of his remarks, Yates was asked if Winter has made any movie star demands, like her own trailer.

"Here's the good thing about that," Yates said. "I'm her agent, so I'm in good shape there."

"Seriously, the good news is: Winter is having fun, but the process of filming itself is completely, utterly under the trainer's control. If (Winter) decides she doesn't want to film for a day, guess what? We won't film for a day."

Steve Persall can be reached at persall@sptimes.com or (727) 893-8365. Read his blog, *Reeling in the Years*, at blogs.tampabay.com/movies.